

**LABOUR MIGRATION TO KERALA:
A STUDY OF TAMIL MIGRANT LABOURERS IN KOCHI**

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ABSTRACT

Kerala is witnessing large inflow of migrant labour from different parts of the country in recent years. Though labourers from states as far as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa now flock to Kerala, those from the neighbouring state of Tamilnadu out number others by a big margin. Higher wages for unskilled labour in the state, large opportunities for employment and shortage of local labour, paradoxically despite the high unemployment rate in the state, led to the massive influx of migrant labour to the state. With signs of rapid growth of state's economy and the increase in activities particularly in the infrastructure and construction sectors, the in-migration is expected to grow faster in the coming years.

The study is of a pilot nature on internal migration in Kerala with a very limited sample size of 100 casual labourers from Tamilnadu seeking work at selected centres on a day to day basis. The sample was drawn from the city of Kochi, which, it is believed accounts for the largest number of in-migrants in view of its fast expansion in economic activities.

The study concludes that the migrant labourers get much higher monetary wages than in their native places. But, they work for longer hours and their real wages may be lower as they have to incur higher cost of living in Kochi on food, shelter and transport. They live in shanty houses/rooms in slum like localities often on a sharing basis. A few of them live on verandas of shops. They have limited access to sanitation facilities and safe water. Their practices of waste disposal pose problems of public health and environment. Their working and living conditions and habits make them suffer from a number of diseases. But their access to public services like health and education is limited. They enjoy very limited protection from labour laws. They also face problems of social integration in Kerala. There are reports of large number of human rights violations. With the possibility of much larger influx in view of the large scale expansion of economic activities in the State, the migrants can put heavy pressure on urban infrastructure, environment and public services. They may also pose many challenges in governance particularly of urban areas. Our study highlights the strong case for a much larger multidisciplinary study on this emerging phenomenon in the State.

LABOUR MIGRATION TO KERALA: A STUDY OF TAMIL MIGRANT LABOURERS IN KOCHI

1. Introduction

Kerala is witnessing large inflow of migrant labour from different parts of the country in the recent years. Though labourers from states as far as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa now flock to Kerala, those from Tamil Nadu outnumber others by a big margin. Within the state, Ernakulam accounts for the largest number of migrants. While a relatively small section of the migrants from other states are professionals and skilled workers, large majority of them are unskilled or semi skilled workers engaged in construction, road works, pipe laying etc¹. Of late the migrants have also entered agriculture, labour intensive sub sectors of industry and many services. The shortage of local labour, higher wages for unskilled labour in the state and opportunities for employment led to the massive influx of migrant labour to the state. It is interesting to note that while many Malayalees migrate to the 'Gulf' countries (Middle East) both for skilled and unskilled work, many of the unskilled labourers from other parts of the country consider Kerala as their 'Gulf'. With signs of rapid growth of state's economy and the increase in activities particularly in the infrastructure and construction sectors, the in-migration is expected to grow faster in the coming years.

2. Migrants in Kerala: What the Census and National Sample Survey Tell Us

Unlike in China, migrants are not required to be registered in India either at the place of origin or at the place of destination². In the absence of such a system, the two major sources of data on internal migration in India are the Census-2001 (tabulated in D Series) and the National Sample Survey for 1999-2000 (NSS)³. It may be noted that Census and NSS capture only

¹ The distinction between skilled labour and unskilled labour is very important because the two groups interact with labour market differently. Skilled workers face fewer problems given their qualifications and bargaining power.

² Ram B. Bhagat, "Conceptual Issues in Measurement of Internal Migration in India", Paper Presented in 25th IUSSP International Conference held in Tours, France, 18-23, July 2005.

³ The latest report on migration is "Migration in India- 1999-2000", Report No. 470, NSSO 55th Round, September 2001.

permanent and semi-permanent migration. They fail to capture fully the short duration migrants discussed in this paper because of their floating character⁴.

One way of categorising the migrants in the Census of India is by place of birth⁵. As per this categorisation, migrants are classified into:

- i. Those who migrated from other districts of the state (intra-state migration)
- ii. Those who migrated from other states (inter-state migration)

According to the Census 2001, 1.3 per cent of the population of Kerala are migrants (by place of birth) from other states. The largest number of in-migrants in the state is from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Significant number of migrants also came from Karnataka. While 67.8 per cent of those who have migrated to Kerala from other states had their place of birth in Tamil Nadu, 13.5 per cent had their place of birth in Karnataka. Other regions from where people have migrated to Kerala include Maharashtra (4.5 %), Andhra Pradesh (2.3 %), Pondicherry (2.1%), Uttar Pradesh (1.4 %) and West Bengal (1.0%) (See Table 1). The Table also indicates that 49.1 per cent of the migrants from other states are female migrants.

⁴ Census provides data on migrants based on place of birth and place of last residence. If the place of birth or place of last residence is different from the place of enumeration, a person is defined as a migrant. In the NSS, a member of the sample household is treated as a migrant if he/she had stayed continuously for at least six months in a place (village/town) other than the village/town where he/she was enumerated. For a discussion on reasons for the under-estimation of migrants, see Ravi Srivastava and S.K.Sasikumar, "An Overview of Migration in India, its Impacts and Key Issues", paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia, 22–24 June 2003, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

⁵ The other classification in the Census is based on place of last residence.

Table 1: Statistics on Migrants (by place of birth) from other states/UTs in Kerala

State/Union Territory	Number of Migrants			Share of state/UT in in-migration to Kerala	Share of Female migrants
	Male	Female	Persons		
Tamil Nadu	148,021	131,681	279,702	67.75	47.08
Karnataka	22,037	33,648	55,685	13.49	60.43
Maharashtra	8,820	9,648	18,468	4.47	52.24
Andhra Pradesh	4,970	4,472	9,442	2.29	47.36
Pondicherry	3,612	5,157	8,769	2.12	58.81
Uttar Pradesh	3,331	2,556	5,887	1.43	43.42
West Bengal	2,666	1,566	4,232	1.03	37.00
Rajasthan	2,150	1,526	3,676	0.89	41.51
Gujarat	1,597	1,797	3,394	0.82	52.95
Bihar	2,045	1,292	3,337	0.81	38.72
Orissa	2,328	999	3,327	0.81	30.03
Delhi	1,458	1,555	3,013	0.73	51.61
Madhya Pradesh	1,203	1,277	2,480	0.60	51.49
Punjab	780	789	1,569	0.38	50.29
Haryana	667	750	1,417	0.34	52.93
Assam	671	508	1,179	0.29	43.09
Jharkhand	634	492	1,126	0.27	43.69
Chhatisgarh	493	561	1,054	0.26	53.23
Lakshadweep	606	262	868	0.21	30.18
Jammu & Kashmir	375	301	676	0.16	44.53
Goa	291	363	654	0.16	55.50
Uttaranchal	244	276	520	0.13	53.08
A & N Islands	261	276	537	0.13	51.40
Himachal Pradesh	219	249	468	0.11	53.21
Nagaland	162	131	293	0.07	44.71
Manipur	130	101	231	0.06	43.72
Chandigarh	115	101	216	0.05	46.76
Arunachal Pradesh	115	92	207	0.05	44.44
Meghalaya	72	85	157	0.04	54.14
Sikkim	40	34	74	0.02	45.95
Mizoram	50	40	90	0.02	44.44
Tripura	47	38	85	0.02	44.71
Daman & Diu	5	7	12	0.00	58.33
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	4	0	4	0.00	0.00
Total	210,219	202,630	412,849	100.00	49.08

Source: compiled from Census of India 2001- D Series.

The NSS data, which differs from the census data due to differences in definition of migrant, also points to the massive inflow of migrants from other states to Kerala. According to NSSO data, migrants to the State in 1999-2000, numbered 10,05,000. It may be noted that both these

surveys were conducted 5-6 years back. It is highly probable that larger number of people has migrated during the last few years.

According to Census 2001, among the districts, Ernakulam district, where Kochi is located, recorded the highest inflow of migrants from other states (See Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Migrants from Other States/UTs in the Districts of Kerala

District	No.of in-migrants	Share of in-migrants
Ernakulam	55977	13.56
Idukki	53056	12.85
Thiruvananthapuram	48575	11.77
Palakkad	47955	11.62
Kasargod	31884	7.72
Kannur	28115	6.81
Thrissur	25358	6.14
Kozhikode	23118	5.60
Malappuram	22092	5.35
Wayanad	18710	4.53
Kollam	16797	4.07
Kottayam	16349	3.96
Pathanamthitta	13683	3.31
Aleppey	11180	2.71
Total	412849	100.00

Source: compiled from Census of India 2001- D Series.

Nearly 60 per cent of the migrants from other states in Ernakulam district came from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. Next in importance are the migrants from Maharashtra and Karnataka (See Table 3).

Table 3: Migrants (by Place of Birth) from other States/UTs in Ernakulam District

State	Persons	Share of in-migrants
Tamil Nadu	33,146	59.21
Maharashtra	4,120	7.36
Karnataka	3,456	6.17
Uttar Pradesh	2,349	4.20
Andhra Pradesh	2,286	4.08
Bihar	1,193	2.13
West Bengal	1,116	1.99
Orissa	1,097	1.96
Rajasthan	1,026	1.83
Gujarat	934	1.67
Haryana	843	1.51
Delhi	755	1.35
Punjab	600	1.07
Other states and UTs	3056	5.46
Total	55,977	100.00

Source: compiled from Census of India 2001- D Series.

3. Tamil Workers in Kochi

Tamil unskilled workers are broadly of two types viz., those working on contract basis and those seeking work in the labour market on a day to day basis. While the former works under a contractor or an agent for a fixed period of time, the latter waits for the employer almost every day in some of the centres in Kochi which have become literally “labour markets”. Some of the centres are: Vathuruthy, Kadavanthra Junction, Kaloor Junction, Market Junction in Banerjee Road, Edappally and Thrikakkara . One can also find spatial concentration of migrants’ dwelling places in certain neighbourhoods such as Vathuruthy, Vazhakkala, Edappally and Thrikkakara. Discussions with some of the employers and contractors indicate that there is a preference for migrant workers over local labour because of the former’s willingness to work for longer hours. There is also a feeling among the contractors and employers that the migrant workers are more obedient and non-complaining than their Malayalee counterparts.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To understand the socio-economic characteristics of Tamil migrant labourers in Kochi and the push and the pull factors taking them to Kochi
- To understand their working and living conditions

- To examine the present and future implications of large scale in-migration on governance particularly of urban areas

5. Methodology

The study is based primarily on a sample survey conducted among Tamil migrant workers in Kochi. Only those who do not possess a Ration Card in Kerala were included in our survey. The study is of a pilot nature on internal migration in Kerala with a very limited sample size of 100 casual workers, seeking work in the labour market on a day-to-day basis. Equal number of male and female workers was selected. The respondents were selected randomly from some of the major centres in the city of Kochi where the migrant workers wait for the employers. The present study did not cover migrants working on regular contract basis⁶. Most of those waiting for jobs in these labour markets are unskilled workers. Pre-tested semi-structured schedule was employed for collecting information from the respondents. The sample survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews with a few migrant workers, employers and local labour.

6. Findings of the Study

The findings of the sample survey are presented in the following section.

6.1 Place of Origin

Table 4 provides the details about the native districts of the respondents. Of the 30 districts in Tamil Nadu, migrants from only 13 districts found a place in the sample. Of this, migrants from neighbouring Dindigul district (a district with high incidence of poverty according Tamil Nadu Human Development Report 2003) constitute more than half (53 per cent) of the sample. Other districts found to have significant representation in the sample include Tiruchirappally (16 per cent), Theni and Madurai (8 per cent each). Thus, 85 per cent of the Tamil migrants in our sample are from the four districts mentioned above. While Dindigul, Theni and Madurai are neighbouring districts with the first two having borders with Kerala, Tiruchirappally district is located far off from Kerala border. It is possible that the regular daily train service to Tiruchirappally has facilitated migration from this far off district (See Figure 1). Most of these migrant workers came from the rural areas of Tamil Nadu. Only three per cent of them were hailing from urban areas (not shown in the Table).

⁶ But in large scale construction as well as infrastructure works, migrant workers are largely recruited through contractors or agents who settle wages, after retaining part of their earnings from the payments received from employer. Sometimes they also play supervisory roles.

6.2 Educational Level

Nearly half of the respondents did not have any schooling. The proportion of female workers with no formal schooling was double that of male workers. However, 19 per cent of the migrants were matriculates. The matriculates were more among male workers (Table 5).

Table 5: Migrants by Educational Level (%)

Level of Schooling	Male	Female	All
No formal schooling	32.0	64.0	48.0
School up to 4 years	6.0	10.0	8.0
5-9 years	30.0	14.0	22.0
Failed matriculation	4.0	2.0	3.0
Matriculated	24.0	10.0	17.0
Above matriculation	4.0	—	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

6.3 Marital Status

Three-fourths of the respondents were married. Thirteen per cent of the respondents were either widowed or separated. While unmarried workers were more among the males, widowed/separated were more among the females.

Table 6: Marital Status of Migrant Labourers (%)

Marital status	Male	Female	All
Single	22.0	2.0	12.0
Married	72.0	78.0	75.0
Widowed	6.0	16.0	11.0
Separated	--	4.0	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Fifty nine per cent of the married respondents reside in Kochi with their spouses while the remaining left their spouse in the village. Among the married male migrants, 72 per cent left their wives in the village. Only 13 per cent of the married women have come to Kochi leaving their husbands in the home village (not shown in the Table).

6.4 Religion/Caste in which they were Born

Large majority of the sample workers are Hindus (94 per cent). Five of them are Christians and the remaining one is a Muslim. Scheduled Castes constituted 14 per cent and Scheduled Tribes three per cent of the sample.

6.5 Push and Pull Factors of Migration

According to 'push' and 'pull' theory, migration may occur as a search for an opportunity to improve one's lot in life. The destination exerts a 'pull' on the migrants. Migration can also occur as a flight from undesirable social or economic situations which constitute an expulsive push by the community (Bogue, 1969). As may be noted from Table 7, it was the low wages and the lack of opportunities in their native village which were the primary factors that have pushed them out of their villages. Drought/water scarcity in their villages also has forced some of the respondents to migrate temporarily. The high wage rates and more employment opportunities were the factors that pulled them to Kochi. (See Section 6.7 for a comparison of the wage rates in Kochi and in the native places of the migrant workers).

Table 7: Push and Pull Factors of Migration (%)

Causes of migration	Male	Female	Total
Low wage in the village	66.0	63.0	63.0
Lack of job opportunities in the village	40.0	48.0	44.0
Water scarcity/drought in the village	28.0	42.0	35.0
Migration of spouse	0.0	4.0	2.0
Family problems	2.0	2.0	2.0
Others	10.0	0.0	5.0

Note: Multiple response question

6.6 Occupation – Before and After Migration

The details of primary occupation of workers before their migration to Kochi are given in Table 8. One-fourth of the migrant workers were engaged in agriculture or were running small scale businesses in their native places. Majority of them (56%) were unskilled workers.

Table 8: Primary Occupation of the Respondents before Migration

Category	Per cent of respondents
Skilled Labour	
Mason	7.0
Gold smith	2.0
Industrial worker	2.0
Other skilled jobs	4.0
Skilled - Total	15.0
Agriculture	20.0
Small Scale business	6.0
Unskilled labour	56.0
No occupation	3.0
Grand - Total	100.0

It was noticed during the survey that the Tamil labourers were ready to take up any job. For instance, even if some respondents mentioned their main occupation as 'construction work', they added "we do any job which the employers offer us". In such a situation, the respondents who work in a construction site one day will go for cleaning canals or digging wells the next day. But majority of the respondents reported that their primary employment is in the construction sector. Most of the respondents whom we met are unskilled labourers. Only nine per cent of them were engaged in some form of skilled jobs. Skilled migrant labourers were engaged in masonry work, painting and plumbing.

6.7 Wages

The average wage per day of the migrant workers is Rs. 211. Women migrants are generally paid less than male migrants. While the male migrants are getting, on an average, Rs. 226 per day, the female workers get only Rs. 196 per day. Table 9 provides the details about the per day earnings of the migrant labourers.

Table 9: Per Day Wages Earned by Migrant Workers (%)

Wages	Male	Female	Total
Below Rs. 200	2.0	18.0	11.0
Rs. 200 to Rs. 224	34.0	66.0	50.0
Rs. 225 to Rs.249	28.0	12.0	20.0
Rs. 250 and above	36.0	2.0	19.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The migrant labourers were asked about the current wages in their home village. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Average Wage Rates in Kochi and in the Places of origin

Particulars	Wage in Kochi	Wage in Home Village
Male	226	96
Female	196	56
Total	211	76
Gender parity index	86.7	58.3

On an average, the earnings of the workers after migration were three times their earlier earnings in Tamilnadu. The difference was much higher in the case of women migrants. While women migrant workers get about three and half times what their counterparts in their home villages get for a day's work, male migrants get about two and half times (235 per cent) the wages in their home villages. The differentials in wage rates of men and women in Kochi were less than in their native villages as may be seen from the more favourable gender parity index of wage rates. As against 58.3 in the villages of Tamil Nadu, the index for Kochi was 86.7.

While there is substantial difference between the monetary wages for casual work in Kochi and in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu, it is important to note that the difference in real wage rates to the migrant workers may not be as high, as they have to incur much higher costs for living in Kochi than in their native places (eg. Rent, cost of hotel food, transportation, communication etc.,).

6.8 Number of Hours of Work

The average number of hours of work per day was found to be nine. As high as 93 percent of the workers reported that they have to work for more than 8 hours on a working day. Thirty per cent reported that they work for more than 9 hours.

6.9 Number of Months Migrants Work in Kochi in a Year

The migrant workers covered by the study have not migrated permanently to Kerala. Most of them do not work for the whole year in Kochi. This finding has implications for the labour market and economic activities dependent on migrant workers. The details about the number of months the respondents usually work in Kochi are presented in Table 11. Half of the male migrant workers work for less than eight months in Kochi. Women migrant workers stay for longer periods than male workers. This may be because these female migrant workers have come along with their husbands while many of the male migrants are not accompanied by their spouses. Moreover, some of them were engaged in agriculture before migration. These workers leave Kochi during the cropping seasons.

Table 11: Number of Months Migrants Work in Kochi in a Year (%)

Number of months	Male	Female	Total
Less than 6 months	13.2	0.0	6.5
6-8 months	36.8	28.2	32.5
8-11 months	7.9	7.7	7.8
Full year	42.1	64.1	53.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Excluding those who came to Kochi during the last one year.

6.10 Remittances of Migrant Workers

As noted earlier, the labourers surveyed by us have not migrated permanently to Kerala and in many cases have their family members staying in the Tamil Nadu villages. Therefore, they transfer a good portion of their wages to their home base. When asked about how the money sent to the villages is being utilised, most of them (86 percent) reported that it is being used for household consumption. Majority of them (59 per cent) also said that it is being used for the education of their children. Eleven per cent reported that it was used to pay off debt. Nearly one-in-ten was able to build a new house or modify their houses after migrating to Kochi. Few of them have used the remittances for marriage and other ceremonies in the house.

6.11 Networking

It was found that the migrants reach Kochi through the networks of friends and relatives already working here. All the respondents reported that they have been helped by relatives or friends in finding jobs in Kochi. Informal discussions with some of the migrants indicated that people from the same region act as a network in many cases. Often, when employers tell a migrant worker about the requirement for a certain number of workers, the latter arranges the required number from those who have migrated from his birth place.

According to anecdotal evidences and news paper reports, the unskilled workers from Tamil Nadu are relatively better off in terms of wages and living and working conditions compared to unskilled migrant workers from other states in the country. The wide network of Tamil workers in the region and their concentration in some places help them in finding jobs and also provides them considerable bargaining power. It is reported that the contractors, of late, have been preferring cheaper labour from North and East India. These workers are more tolerant to poorer working and living conditions and it is easier to extract labour from them. They also do not leave for home frequently. Many of the human rights violations are reportedly happening in contract work particularly employing unskilled migrant workers from North and Eastern parts of the country.

6.12 Concentration of Migrants

The migrants are concentrated in particular areas in the city. This happens because it will be easier for them to establish their social networks and maintain their linguistic and cultural identities. There are such obvious advantages for the migrants in such a settlement pattern. Another reason for the concentration of migrant workers in certain pockets could be the unwillingness of the local people to rent out houses to migrants from other states due to cultural and other reasons. In a meeting of one of the residents' associations in the city, a Police Officer in the local police station is reported to have warned the residents of the need for taking additional precautions while renting out the premises to the migrants. While, it may be justifiable to some extent seen from the crime detection angle, the message that is passed on to the local people can act against accessing houses by the migrants.

6.13 Accommodation and Food

Nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of the migrant workers have their family members staying in Kochi. In most of these respondent families (97 per cent), at least one more member of the family is working in Kochi. Of the married respondents, 31 per cent did not bring any member of the family to Kochi and 41 per cent did not bring their spouses. Table 10 provides the details about the type of accommodation of the respondents who are living with family and those living alone in Kochi.

Table 12: Type of Accommodation in Kochi

Type of Accommodation	Percentage of Respondents
Staying with family	
Independent house	4.8
Single room	69.4
House shared with others	21.0
Room shared with others	4.8
Total (Base=62)	100.0
Staying alone in Kochi	
Single Room	78.9
House/room shared with others	13.3
Verandah of shops	7.8
Total (Base=38)	100.0

Most of the migrant workers live in shanty houses/rooms in slum-like localities often on a sharing basis. In many cases, the houses/rooms are over crowded. Only one in twenty families lives in an independent house. Others live mostly in a single room or share a house with others. This pattern is different from the usual pattern of accommodation of Malayalee families in Kerala. Many of the migrant families live in small houses or rooms where adequate toilet facilities are absent. Few of the workers who are not accompanied by their family members live in verandahs of shops. Sharing of one toilet by two or more families sometimes force some of them to use the public places instead of toilets.

Table 13 presents the availability of basic amenities such as toilets, drinking water and water for other purposes.

Table 13: Availability of Amenities in the Living Place

Amenities	Percent
Toilet facility	
Separate	7.0
Common	87.0
No toilet	6.0
Total	100.0
Source of drinking water	
Public tap	91.0
Piped water	1.0
Well	6.0
Shop	2.0
Total	100.0
Source of water for other purposes	
Public tap	73.0
Piped water	7.0
Well	17.0
Pond	1.0
Public Comfort Station/Shop	1.0
Total	

While six per cent of the migrants did not have toilet facility in their places of living, 87 per cent share the toilets with others. The situation has implications not only on the health of the individual migrants but also on public health of the region. It was found that most of the migrant workers use public taps for sourcing drinking water and water for other purposes. One respondent told us that he is using public comfort station where he pays Rs.10 daily for bathing and washing.

About one-fourth of the respondents do not have electric connection in their living space. Seventy eight per cent of the respondents (excluding the persons residing in the verandah and roadside) cook their food in their dwelling place. Three-fourths (76.9 per cent) of those who cook food at home use kerosene as cooking fuel and the remaining use firewood. Though the source of firewood has not been ascertained in the survey, instances of cutting firewood from the mangroves near the habitation of the migrants have been reported by local people in some

places. This can have serious implications on the urban environment of Kochi. None of the migrants use LPG. Large majority (85 per cent) of those who cook food at home do not have a separate kitchen. They usually cook the food in the same room where they live. In many cases, these rooms did not have proper ventilation.

About two-thirds of the migrants pay a monthly rent in the range of Rs. 500 to Rs.1000. Only three percent are paying more than Rs. 1000 as monthly rent. Seven per cent of the respondents do not pay any rent as they render some services to the owner of the house where they are allowed to live.

Table 14: Rent per Month for Accommodation

Rent	Percentage of Respondents
No rent	7.0
Below Rs.500	25.0
Rs.500 to Rs.1000	65.0
Above Rs.1000	3.0
Total	100.0

We have seen earlier that only three-fourths of the migrant workers cook food at home. We asked the respondents whether they usually have their breakfast, lunch and dinner from hotels. The results are presented in Table 15.

Table 15: Percentage of Respondents Taking Food From Hotel*

Particulars	Male	Female	Total
Breakfast	62.0	24.0	43.0
Lunch	64.0	8.0	36.0
Dinner	46.0	2.0	24.0

Note: Others take food from home

Nearly two-thirds of the male workers eat breakfast and lunch from hotels. However, majority have their dinner at home. While one-fourth of the female workers have their breakfast from hotels, most of them have their lunch brought from home. Almost all female workers have their dinner at home.

6.14 Management of Domestic Waste

One major problem identified by the study is that the domestic waste from the migrants' residences is dumped in public places (Table 16).

Table 16: System of Disposal of Domestic Waste

Particulars	Percentage of Respondents
Dumping in the corporation dumping place	34.0
Throw in drain	34.0
Dumping near the dwelling place	14.4
Dump in open place/road	7.3
Throw into Canals/river	7.2
Burying	2.1
Burning	1.0
Total	100.0

Note: excluding those who do not have dwelling place

As may be noted from Table 16, only one-third of the migrant workers dispose the domestic waste in the proper designated places. Some of them are throwing the waste in river/canals. The practices of waste disposal followed by the migrant workers have serious implications on the urban environment and public health.

6.15 Health Related Aspects

It is well known that household environment plays a crucial role in determining the health of its occupant. Overcrowded living conditions of the migrant labourers result in increased transmission of infectious diseases. As noted earlier, in many cases, there are problems in the provision of sanitation facilities. In some cases, the sources of drinking water as well as water for other purposes are also not very good. Non-availability of adequate quantities of water and inadequate usage of water also pose health risks. Cooking food in the living rooms without proper ventilation particularly while using firewood and kerosene is hazardous to health. These unhygienic living conditions make the migrant workers vulnerable to diseases. The unfavourable working conditions can also lead to serious occupational and other health

problems⁷. Many of the workers have habits which can lead to poor health in the long run. These are presented in Table 17.

Table 17: Unhealthy Habits

Habits	Male	Female	Total
Drink alcohol	60.0	2.0	31.0
Smoking	70.0	2.0	36.0
Use Pan parag	16.0	8.0	12.0
Chewing tobacco	14.0	48.0	31.0

Drinking alcohol and smoking are largely restricted to male workers. Majority of the male workers drink alcohol and smoke. Use of Pan Parag is not widespread. But about half of the female workers are in the habit of chewing Pan. The Pan chewing habit is more among women than among men.

Eighty seven per cent of the respondents reported having had some diseases while staying in Kochi. Incidence of fever and headache was very high. One-in-ten respondents were having cough. Some of these problems are occupation related.

Table 18: Illnesses while Working in Kochi

Illness	Percent
Fever	81.0
Headache	71.0
Cough	11.0
Cold	5.0
Pain in leg/hand	4.0
Stomach pain	2.0
Body pain	2.0
Back pain	2.0
Chest pain	1.0
No disease yet	13.0

* multiple response

⁷ For a detailed discussion on the relationship between migration and health, see Chandrima B. Chatterjee, Identities in Motion: Migration and Health In India, Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT), Mumbai, 2006

Table 19 presents the details of the place where the migrant workers usually go for treatment of diseases.

Table 19: Place of Treatment of Illness

Places of treatment	Total
Private hospital/clinic in Kochi	36.8
Medical shop	29.8
Government hospital in Kochi	20.7
Go to hospital in the village	8.1
Did not go for treatment	2.3
Total	100.0

One-third go to a private hospital/clinic. It is important to note that a significant proportion (30 per cent) approach a medical shop for treatment. Only one-fifth of the workers approach a government hospital. Eight per cent of those who had some disease while working in Kochi reported that they had gone to their village for treatment because of their inability to communicate effectively with the doctor in Malayalam. Few did not undergo any treatment.

The temporary nature of their stay in Kerala might be one of the reasons for not preferring government hospitals for treatment. Treatment is made available from the government hospitals free of cost only if they belong to BPL families. With no ration card, these migrant labourers are not eligible for free/subsidised treatment in government hospitals. Some of them told us that they have tried to get ration cards in Kerala and paid money to some agents for it. But they have lost hope of getting it after a long wait. Timings of the government hospitals are also not convenient to the daily labourers like the migrants.

It is found that while migrant labourers avail themselves of curative care, though very often not at the desired level, they fall largely outside the coverage of preventive care due to the temporary nature of their employment and stay. It is found that the public health personnel seldom visit the settlements where the migrant labourers live. Just two per cent of the respondents reported that they were visited by the health worker in the month previous to the survey.

The respondents who were having children aged below 5 years residing with them in Kochi were asked whether the vaccination appropriate for the age was given to their children. Only three respondents were having children in this age category living in Kochi and all these respondents gave the relevant vaccination and polio drop for their children during the last immunisation programme. But it was reported that they didn't have information on where polio drops are given and therefore took their children to their village and gave the polio drop there.

It appears that the public health system remains to be largely ignorant about the serious implications of not addressing the health issues of the migrant population. Unless preventive measures are taken, they can also act as carriers of communicable diseases like Chikungunya and dengue fever from and to their native places. Due to the current attention on the link between migration and spread of HIV/AIDS, NGOs working in HIV/AIDS control programme are active to some extent among the migrants. According to studies conducted elsewhere, migrants are more likely to be in high-risk situations with respect to this disease as they live away from their spouses and are more likely to engage in unprotected sex.

Our study found that substantial proportion (27 per cent) of workers had work related injuries while in Kochi. In the case of two-thirds of the injured workers, the employers met the medical expenses in full. In the remaining cases, the expenses were not even partially met.

6.16 Educational Status of Children

Most of the children of the migrant workers stay back in their villages in Tamil Nadu. Just four children in the age group of 6-14 in the families of the migrant workers in the sample have accompanied their parents to Kochi. Of these, only two are going to school. But most of the children staying back in the home village belonging to this age group are going to school. Of the children in the pre-school going age (above 3 years but less than six years), only three out of the five children staying in Kochi are going to pre-school. Seventy eight per cent of the children of the migrant workers in this age group staying in their home village go to a pre-school. Urgent measures are to be taken to address the educational needs of the children of migrant labour, including the need for Tamil medium in schools. One suggestion is to expand

the coverage of Alternative Schooling Programme⁸ under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to children of migrant labourers working in different parts of Kerala.

6.17 Possession of Durables

Regarding the possession of consumer durables, 23 per cent of the respondents have radio in the village whereas only 5 per cent own a radio in Kochi. About one-in-ten respondents have television in their home in the village. Six per cent of the respondents have mobile phone in Kochi. One-third of the migrants had a bicycle in their home village. Very few workers own telephone, mixer grinder, refrigerator or two-wheeler.

Table 20: Respondents by Possession of Consumer Durables (%)

Durable	In the place of origin	In Kochi
Radio	23.0	5.0
Television	11.0	9.0
Telephone	3.0	2.0
Mobile phone	1.0	6.0
Mixer grinder	5.0	1.0
Refrigerator	2.0	1.0
Cycle	32.0	12.0
Two-wheeler	4.0	1.0

6.18 Habits

We enquired about the entertainment activities and media habits of the workers. The results are presented in Table 21.

Table 21: Respondents by Different Habits (%)

Habits	Male	Female	Total
Read newspaper	56.0	16.0	36.0
Listen radio	68.0	70.0	69.0
Watch TV	72.0	74.0	73.0
Go for cinema	62.0	30.0	46.0

⁸ Alternative Schools are multi-grade schools meant for dropouts, and unenrolled children. It is usually started to address the educational needs of children in the inaccessible locations and children of migrant families.

Only about one-third of the migrant workers read newspaper. The habit of reading news papers is much more among the male workers than among the female workers. But, many of the migrant workers are illiterate as noted earlier. Of the total literate respondents, 60 percent read newspaper (not shown in the Table). More than two-thirds of the workers, of both genders, listen to radio though only five per cent of them have a radio in Kochi. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents watch TV, though only nine per cent of them have TV in Kochi. Most of these workers listen to radio or view TV in the nearby shop or neighbour's house. Except a few, the respondents listen/view only Tamil programmes in radio/TV.

6.19 Visit to Home Villages

Fifty five per cent of the respondents visit their home in their village once in a month. Nine percent visit their homes once in two weeks. But nine per cent visit their village only during festivals or for ceremonies. Deepavali followed by Pongal are the two common festivals for which most of the respondents go home. When they go for festivals, 55 per cent of the respondents stay upto a week in their home while nine per cent stay one to three months there and then return to Kochi. This frequent trips of the migrants and their long/short absences from Kochi have adverse implications for timely execution of work. This may be one of the reasons for the preference shown for non-Tamil workers by employers.

Table 22: Frequency of Visit to the Home in the Village

Frequency	Percent
Once in two weeks	9.0
Once in a month	55.0
Once in two months	7.0
Once in 3 months	6.0
Once in six months	13.0
Only for festivals \ ceremonies	9.0
Do not go	1.0
Total	100.0

Table 23: Festivals for which the Respondents Go Home*:

Festival	Percent
Deepavali	97.0
Pongal	86.0
Festival in temple	14.0
Other festivals	3.0
Christmas, Easter	1.0

*Multiple responses

6.20 Communication with Relatives in the Village

Four in five respondents communicate with their family members once in a week or more often.

Table 24: Frequency and Mode of Communication

Frequency of Communication	Percent
Five times in a week	2.0
Thrice in a week	11.0
Twice in a week	11.0
Once in a week	55.0
Once in two weeks	11.0
Once in a month	3.0
No communication	7.0
Total	100.0

6.21 Positive Aspects of Working and Living in Kochi

As noted earlier, better wages in Kochi is the most important factor that attracted people to Kochi. Opportunity for getting work is the other important work-related attraction for Kochi. Some of them are happy as they could get the job they preferred. Among the factors related to the living environment in Kochi, the most cited one was the availability of accommodation facility in Kochi. About half of the respondents felt so. Good transport facilities and good food were the other positive aspects of Kochi's living environment as reported by the migrants.

6.22 Problems Faced by Migrant workers

The most important problem cited by the Tamil migrant workers in Kochi is that they had to quarrel sometimes with the local people in the work site or in the place where they wait for work. Few of them reported blackmailing or physical torturing by local people. Language barriers were reported by some of the respondents. A small section also reported that lack of information about accessing public services is a major problem they face in Kochi.

Table 25: Problems Faced by Migrant workers who reported having problems

Problem	Percentage
Quarrel with local people in worksite/waiting place for work	25.0
Blackmailing/torturing by Malayalee labourers	7.0
Language barriers.	7.0
Lack of information about accessing services	3.0
Lack of opportunities for work	2.0
Higher food and lodging expenses	2.0
Frequent Shifting house	1.0
Did not get the wage offered	1.0

Note: Multiple response question

Anecdotal evidence and newspaper reports suggest that the problems encountered by the Tamil migrants are fewer than those encountered by migrants from other regions. Their large number, networking possibilities and proximity to their native places are some of the advantages which workers from Tamilnadu have which others from distance states lack.

7. Need for Research on Different Aspects of In-Migration to Kerala

There are a number of studies on the diverse aspects of migration of Keralites to other countries particularly to countries in the Middle East. But the growing in-migration to the state has received only very little attention from researchers. It warrants, in our view, high priority in the research agenda of the state. There is a strong need for more in-depth and policy-oriented research on internal migration which should focus on issues relating to labour market, poverty and vulnerability, access to health care and education, urban planning and environment. Issues related to labour market include the nature of migration, its seasonality and its effect on work scheduling in Kerala, reasons for preferring migrant workers, recruitment patterns, work style of

the migrant workers, their skill sets etc. Access to public services for migrants and their families and extension of social security schemes to them have to be examined in detail. The effectiveness of the implementation of various laws and regulations, including Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (See Appendix) and Contract Labour Act, in relation to migrants from other states also needs to be examined⁹.

There are reports of widespread violation of human rights in the hands of the police. This is another area which requires exploration. Migrants are sometimes being branded as 'unreliable outsiders' and criminals by some local people. The Police also has contributed to fostering of this branding. No doubt, there are migrants from other states in the Criminal List published in the website of the Police Department. To distinguish the migrant workers from the criminals who have migrated to Kerala from other states, there is a need to have some identification documents for the workers. One such programme was initiated in Madhya Pradesh by the Grameen Vikas Trust (GVT). GVT worked closely with the local governments of source villages and has developed an informal system of identity cards for migrants. With these cards, migrants have some protection against official harassment.¹⁰ Perhaps the applicability of the scheme in Kerala may be worth studying.

The social ostracism, stereotyping and in some cases outright discrimination as a result of prejudices based on linguistic and cultural differences require to be studied. As noted earlier,

⁹ Many instances of exploitation by the middle men have been reported in the newspapers. For instance, The Hindu dated January 7, 2007 reports about the pitiable accommodation provided to the migrant workers by a contractor in Kochi. About 30 workers were provided accommodation in three portions of a small house. The Hindu dated March 10, 2005, reported another instance of violation of the rules pertaining to migrant workers working in Thiruvananthapuram city. The report says that the Labour Department has initiated action against a construction firm involved in the City Roads Development Scheme in Thiruvananthapuram on the charge of violating the provisions of the Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1979. The action was initiated on the basis of reports that migrant labourers were being denied minimum wages and proper living conditions in the labour camps run by the firm in the city. The department found that the wage registers, muster rolls and particulars of migrant workers were not being maintained properly. The company did not adhere to the welfare clauses in the Act, such as free medical care, proper living conditions and journey and displacement allowances. According to the report, several firms were employing migrant labourers without Government sanction. The law stipulates that labour contractor recruiting more than five migrant workers should get a recruitment licence from the home State of the labourer and an employment licence from the Labour Department of the State where they are to be employed. The unauthorised contractors offer employers cheap labour for less than Rs. 120 a day. The labourers would be paid only less than Rs. 50. The report says that the firms and also contractors ensure that no records of the worker related transactions are maintained to prevent any scrutiny by law enforcers. The exploited migrant workers, fearing loss of jobs, are often reluctant to cooperate with the officials.

¹⁰ Priya Deshingkar and Sven Grimm, "Internal Migration and Development: A Global Perspective", No.19, International Organisation for Migration, Geneva, 2005.

migrants originate from different social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and work in different sectors at different levels. Their requirements in Kerala are different. Hence, it is important to capture the diversities and complexities of the in-migration phenomenon through extensive research. Their problems of integration in Kerala society is yet another issue to be studied. All these call for a much larger study covering all parts of Kerala and migrants engaged in occupations like agriculture, industry, services and self-employment. Migrants from states other than Tamil Nadu also need to be covered in such a study.

8. Conclusion

The present pilot study aims at alerting the policy makers, planners and administrators, at the state as well as the local level on some of the issues resulting from the rapid growth of migrant population in Kerala. In view of the rising in-migration, questions related to governance, public health, sanitation, water supply, housing, urban environment, educational and infrastructural needs, law and order, etc., warrant greater attention at the level of policy planning and implementation. The large influx of migrants from different parts of the country with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds puts pressure on governance as well as civic amenities. Besides, in the absence of reliable information on the quantum of in-migration of a floating nature, these migrants are unlikely to be taken into account while making population projections and consequently in planning. For integrating the issues relating to migration into local governance, alternative population projections which include migrants of all types have to be made. The volume and diversity of the migrant population has to be taken into account in urban planning and implementation of programmes and projects like the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) Programme and Kerala Sustainable Urban Development Project (KSUDP). Unless the numerous problems of the increasing number of migrant labour including their integration in Kerala society are not addressed in time, they can lead to violent social unrest as it happened in countries like France in recent years.

APPENDIX

Laws Applicable to Migrant worker

Almost all labour laws are applicable to migrant workers also. One specific Act pertaining to inter-state migrant workers is the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation and Conditions of Service) Act 1979. The Act only covers interstate migrants recruited through contractors or middlemen and those establishments that employ five or more such workers on any given day. Contractors and establishments are required to be licensed and registered by a notified registering authority. The Contractor is required to issue a passbook to every worker, giving details about the worker, including payments and advances.

Other laws include:

- Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996
- Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923
- Payment of Wages Act, 1936
- Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986
- Bonded Labour Act, 1976

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